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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. INSANALLY

(President of the General Assembly)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ALLOCATION OF ITEMS: MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/BUR/48/1 and Add.1)

Section V. Allocation of items (continued)

Item 41

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, following consultations, the Committee wished to recommend that item 41 should be allocated to the Second Committee on the understanding that it would be introduced in plenary meeting and considered in the Second Committee.

2. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that item 41 should be allocated to the Second Committee.

Item 45

3. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that item 45 should be considered directly in plenary meeting.

Item 156

4. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the light of the statements made at the previous meeting and of consultations with delegations and the Secretariat, he had the impression that the Committee wished to allocate item 156 to the Second Committee, although it had taken due note of the Secretary-General's request that item 156 should be considered directly in plenary meeting on the grounds that the interim office concept extended beyond that of operational activities for development.

5. Mr. GOZELIK (Russian Federation) said his delegation felt that the concept of interim offices was directly related to the current role of the United Nations in an interdependent world in which political, socio-economic, humanitarian and other aspects were closely linked. The United Nations needed to take an integrated approach to the needs and challenges it faced in the modern world. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/48/146/Add.1), a unified United Nations presence at the country level was an important component of that approach and was essential in order to improve inter-agency cooperation not only in the social and economic sphere but also in the political, peacemaking and other areas. If the concept of interim offices were limited to operational activities for development and programme coordination it would restrict the debate. His delegation therefore felt that item 156 should be considered in plenary meeting. If no agreement could be reached, a decision should be deferred to allow further consultations.

6. Mr. AGUILAR-HECHT (Guatemala) recalled that in paragraph (b) of its decision 47/469, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to ensure that his proposals relating to the structure, functions and activities of the seven United Nations interim offices in question fully complied with the

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(Mr. Aguilar-Hecht, Guatemala)

mandates of the relevant General Assembly resolutions pertaining to operational activities and dissemination of information, in particular resolutions 47/199 and 47/73. Item 156 must therefore be considered within the framework of operational activities for development as a sub-item.

7. Mr. Wood (United Kingdom) said that his delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal that item 156 should be considered directly in plenary meeting. For the reasons given by the Secretary-General and the representative of the Russian Federation, it would not be appropriate to deal with the item exclusively in the Second Committee. If agreement could not be reached, a decision should be deferred to allow for further consultations. The allocation of the item to the plenary Assembly would not in any way inhibit delegations from expressing their views.

8. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of Colombia had asked to participate in the discussion of the item. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to accede to his request.

9. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Jaramillo (Colombia) took a place at the Committee table.

10. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia) said that the General Assembly had already decided that the item should be part of the item entitled "Operational activities for development" and had requested the Secretary-General to submit a report. It was for that reason that the members of the Group of 77 and China considered that the item should be considered in the Second Committee. The Secretary-General could always submit a further proposal at a later stage, and the General Assembly could then take it up.

11. Mr. MONGBE (Benin) said that it had been clearly decided by the General Assembly that the question of United Nations interim offices should be considered by the Second Committee. In paragraph (c) of decision 47/469, the General Assembly had decided that the report to be presented by the Secretary-General should be submitted also to the Second Committee for its consideration and recommendations. It was, moreover, significant that the title of the decision was "Revised estimates under section 31 (Public information)". That decision derived from an earlier decision, resolution 34/213, paragraph 5, in which the General Assembly reaffirmed that the tasks of the resident coordinator should pertain exclusively to operational activities of the United Nations system.

12. Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) said that he fully agreed that the Secretary-General's report should be referred to the Second Committee. There were, however, some aspects which were outside the scope of the Second Committee; for example, in section III of his report (A/48/146/Add.1), the Secretary-General referred to the legal status of interim offices, humanitarian activities and information, which were not within the competence of the Second Committee. The problem was not which Committee should discuss the report, since it should clearly go to the Second Committee, but what to do about the other aspects. It might be necessary to hold further consultations on that matter.

13. Mrs. FRECHETTE (Canada) said that at least four different options had been suggested by different delegations. It might therefore be wise to hold further consultations in order to avoid taking a divisive decision.

14. Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation agreed that item 156 should be dealt with in the Second Committee. With regard to the comments made by the representative of Egypt, his delegation felt that the Secretary-General could always submit a further report, which could then be allocated for further consideration by the Committee.

15. Mr. HADID (Algeria) said that his delegation fully supported the position put forward by the representative of Colombia. The allocation of item 156 to the Second Committee did not in any way reduce its importance; in the framework of restructuring and revitalization, the Second Committee had a very important role to play. Furthermore, the item was to be a sub-item of the item entitled "Operational activities for development" and it was difficult to isolate a sub-item and transfer it to the plenary Assembly unless the whole item was transferred. It was important, moreover, to avoid overburdening the plenary Assembly.

16. Mr. SREENIVASAN (India) said that there seemed to be basic agreement that item 156 should be considered in the Second Committee. Moreover, many delegations, especially those from developing countries, did not want other aspects of the question to be considered outside the context of operational activities for development.

17. Mr. ROSENSTOCK (United States of America) said that the Committee had already decided that item 156 would be a separate item, not a sub-item; moreover, decisions taken by previous sessions of the General Assembly could not be binding the current session in respect of procedure. The allocation of an item to the plenary Assembly did not bar its consideration elsewhere any more than its allocation to one committee or another would restrict its scope. The proposal made by the representative of Egypt offered a possibility of reaching agreement without having to resort to a vote.

18. Mr. LEGAL (France) said that the Committee should be able to reach agreement on the basis of the proposal put forward by the representative of Egypt.

19. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia) said that he agreed with the representative of Egypt that the report under item 156 should be allocated to the Second Committee; there was a legislative basis for that course of action in General Assembly decision 47/469. There would, moreover, be enormous difficulties in reaching agreement on any other interpretation. The Group of 77 and China could not accept any political dimension of United Nations offices in their countries.

20. Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) said that he had indicated that, while the item should be allocated to the Second Committee it also had political dimensions which were clearly outside the purview of the Second Committee. Either those issues could be taken up by the General Assembly and then referred back to the Second Committee or a decision could be deferred pending further discussions.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that while there were many divergent views, he had made his suggestion on the basis of the consultations carried out before the meeting. He read out paragraphs (b) and (c) of decision 47/469 in the hope that it would help the Committee in its consideration of the matter.

22. Mr. ROSENSTOCK (United States of America) said that the issue was where the item could best be discussed. The representative of Egypt had suggested that the various aspects of the item might be discussed in various forums. No decision regarding the allocation of the item could affect its scope, which had been spelled out in the report of the Secretary-General. It should be possible to find a compromise solution based on the representative of Egypt's suggestion. That, however, would require more time.

23. Mr. GOZELIK (Russian Federation) said that, judging from the trend of its discussions, the Committee was missing the main point of the Secretary-General's report, which stressed a broader approach to the matter. His delegation would like to avoid the kind of situation where the context of a discussion was limited; that could only have a negative impact on the scope and breadth of the discussion.

24. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia) said that he was concerned at the implication in the United States representative's earlier statement that General Assembly decisions were valid only for the session at which they were adopted.

25. Mr. MONGBE (Benin) said it was important that there should be continuity and consistency in the work of the General Assembly. He could consider the representative of Canada's suggestion that further consultations should be held, provided that involved no more than a few hours' delay.

26. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka), supported by Mr. Li ZHAOXING (China), said it was right to stress the importance of the role and functions of the General Assembly, in particular, the continuity of its work. The Group of 77 unanimously agreed that item 156 should be allocated to the Second Committee. It was also agreed, however, that there were elements of the item which went beyond the competence of the Second Committee. If there were issues which were outside the competence of the Second Committee, they could be referred back to the General Committee for allocation elsewhere.

27. The CHAIRMAN reiterated that the item should be allocated to the Second Committee and that should the Committee realize that some issues fell outside its purview those issues could be brought to the attention of other Committees. If that decision was not acceptable then he would, regrettably, have to resort to a vote.

28. Mr. WOOD (United Kingdom) said that there were possibilities for a compromise on the issue but they had not yet been clearly formulated. A delay of a few days could enable such a compromise to be reached.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that he did not believe that time could contribute towards reaching any solution.

30. Mr. HADID (Algeria) pointed out that the Secretary-General's annual report on the work of the Organization (A/48/1) which would be discussed in plenary

(Mr. Hadid, Algeria)

meeting, dealt, inter alia, with the question of interim offices. The matter could thus be discussed when the plenary Assembly considered that report.

31. Mr. ROSENSTOCK (United States of America) said that item 156 had already been recommended for inclusion in the agenda. If other delegations did not object to its allocation to the Second Committee, he would not object either, although he felt that that was not the best solution.

32. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that item 156 should be allocated to the Second Committee, on the understanding that that Committee could seek the views of other Main Committees on aspects of the question which might be outside its competence.

33. Mr. Jaramillo (Colombia) withdrew.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ALLOCATION OF ITEMS: REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM SUBMITTED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/233)

34. The CHAIRMAN said that the inclusion of an item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observation Mission in Georgia" had been requested by the Secretary-General, who had suggested that the item should be allocated to the Fifth Committee.

35. The Committee decided to recommend that the General Assembly should include the additional item in the agenda.

36. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item should be allocated to the Fifth Committee.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.